



SYNOPSIS.

Automobile of Miss Dorothy Upton and friend, Mrs. Fane, breaks down at New Mexico border, patrol camp commanded by Lieutenant Kynaston. The two women are on way to mine of Miss Upton's father, located a few miles across the Mexican border. Kynaston leaves women at his camp while he goes with a detail to investigate report of Villa gun runners. Villa troops drive small force of Carranza across border line and they surrender to Kynaston. Dorothy and Mrs. Fane still at camp when Kynaston returns with prisoners. A blind Mexican priest appears in camp.

An aged and blind priest tells Kynaston and his guests an amazing story of wonderful jewels and a looted shrine and of a long and heart-breaking quest for one rare treasure. You'll wonder, as you read, whether or not the old padre is wandering in both mind and body—for truly his tale is strange.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

While they were eating the appetizing meal that the trumpeter spread for them upon the camp table beneath the solitary live oak that stood before the tent, they watched the sergeant help the stranger down the hill. Taking the blind man to the fire, he seated him upon a saddle that lay near the cooking tent, and came forward with a salute.

"He's a priest, sir—a padre; and from what little I can make out of his lingo he's had a pretty bad time of it, sir. Shall I bring him up?"

"Yes."

Kynaston sprang up.

"Mrs. Fane, do you and Miss Upton object to my asking the old fellow to take his breakfast here with us? I hardly like to send him down among the prisoners to eat. He seems a cut above them, don't you know?"

"Why, of course not, Mr. Kynaston. Please do exactly as you would if we were not here. I am sure he will be very interesting."

So Kynaston went down to the fire, where the old man was explaining in broken English and Mexican patois to the prisoners, for them to translate to the Americans, that he was more tired than hungry, but that most of all he desired to hold converse with the commanding officer. Having introduced himself, Kynaston asked the old man to come to his tent and join him in coffee.

They found the two ladies already at their meal. Kynaston seated the old man between the two and poured him a cupful of steaming coffee that woke him into speech.

"Never before, señor, have I crossed the line. A Mayan am I, as all my people were for twelve generations that stretch their hands back even unto the days before there were Spaniards in Tenochtitlan."

"For the space of twelve men's lives have we lived under the shadows of El Tio, seeing always the surf break on the outlying bars. Two years ago I came north, even as Coronado came, part of the way on my feet, part on asses; always with pain, for to the blind, señor, all paths are hard. And at last my dream vanished."

"Thy dream?"

"Aye, señor, my dream, for know thou that I came not without an aim. That aim has been to follow and recover what these thieves of the world have taken."

He pointed his thumb over his shoulder toward the fire, where the prisoners still sat over the bacon and hard bread that were being cooked for them by the cooks of the troop.

"And art thou really blind?"

"So that, señor, for fifty years I have not seen the light of day."

Mrs. Fane and Dorothy murmured their sympathy.

"So I have come, señor. For now three hundred years I and my fathers before me kept the shrine where it has been deposited since the days when Cortez came back from the courts of the old world to hold his court at Cuernavaca, and, finding there in power the evil man, Pedrarias, his enemy, retired to live upon his estates."

"Ye know, señor and ladies, how it was said that the conquistador poisoned his first wife so that he could marry a second wife who should advance his fortunes. It was to this second wife that he gave those wonderful jewels, as all the world knows; the wonderful emeralds that Queen Isabella asked for in vain and that made Cortez the most courted man in all Madrid. Hast thou heard of them?"

Mrs. Fane and Dorothy looked their interest. All people are interested in the mere mention of jewels or precious stones—even those who do not possess them.

"I have heard," said Kynaston slowly, "the same tale all men know, the tale which Gomara wrote to the effect that Cortez received as a part of the ransom of the Emperor Montezuma five great emeralds, and that

when payment was made to the Spanish king of the royal fifth part of the treasure the stones were kept by the conqueror as a part of his own share."

"Dost thou know then, or does any man know, what afterward became of the stones?"

The old man leaned forward in his eagerness, turning toward the sound of Kynaston's voice. His interest was obvious.

Dorothy and Mrs. Fane took no pains to hide their interest now.

"It was said, of course—what thou knowest—that the emeralds were taken home by him to Spain, and that when he married a second time he gave these to his wife. The queen had hinted that she herself was not unwilling to receive as a gift those most wonderful stones."

"They were, señor, as Gomara says. Like this: One in the shape of a great rose, the second a fish with eyes of gold, the third an emerald cup, and the fourth a man's head with ruby eyes set in the green surface. With none of these, señor, are we concerned."

"The fifth and the most beautiful of all was a great bell, made of solid emerald, that stood, perhaps—so they tell me, at least, for how can a blind man see?—the height of a man's thumb; carved, mark thee, from the solid emerald—the tongue is made of a pear-shaped pearl, and about the base, carved and set most probably by some skilled workman of Seville, these words, let into the jewel in letters of gold:

"Blessed is he who created thee."

"But, padre, we all know—the world knows—that when Cortez went with his king—Charles—to fight the Moors he took the stones with him, and when he was wrecked at sea off the Azores coast the stones were lost—"

The old priest sat back clicking his tongue softly.

"Then, señor, if this be true, I and my family for ten generations have been made fools of, for during ten men's lives some member of my fam-

ily has always kept the shrine of Our Lady of Olvidados down in Yucatan, where the old faith still holds, and where men have not gone after strange gods—"

"But how in the world if you live in Yucatan did you ever work your way so far north?"

"When General Zapata rose in rebellion after President Diaz had fled to France, the whole country rose with him. Every place was looted, and what few treasures we had were taken."

"We in Trocanto managed to hide the wealth of the shrine, and for months my brother, who had the care of the shrine itself, had little trouble in secreting the wealth that we had hidden for nigh four hundred years."

"We had the stone—no, señor, not the five; only one—the greatest and most valuable. So rich it was—!—that I am told men's hearts turned to water at the mere sight of it. I know right well that I would have given much to see it for only one little moment; but it was not to be."

"They came, señor, by night—as beasts of prey always come—and they looted the temple and burned it after they had looted. I was not there at the time, but when I returned I found my brother dying of a gunshot wound and my mother— It is best not to go into particulars, señor."

"They had no fear of God. It is lacking always, they say, in a mob that knows neither law nor leader. And the stone was gone—looted—taken, as everything else was taken, with the raiders when they fled to the north."

"Always, señor, our raiders have come from the north, from the days

of old when the Toltecs came down upon the land, and when following them the countless thousands of the red savages drove the Toltecs in headlong flight, bringing death and desolation upon the land. And then the Spaniards came, and—thou knowest the rest, señor."

"I do but speak the empty vaporings of age. I am seventy-six years of age, and I have tracked that stone northward—northward ever since that day when Zapata's men robbed the shrine."

"Those men who fled yesterday across the line, and who found refuge with thee have the stone. They took it in fair fight from the rebels, who were moving toward El Paso with it in the hope of selling it for gold with which to purchase arms and ammunition for their cause."

"And they in turn have lost the stone to thee; for a passing cowboy told me that these men had surrendered to the Americans and guided me the greater part of the way to thy camp."

"I am no rebel, señor. I am a churchman, not a soldier. But—I seek the stone—I, now that my brother is dead; I, the Blind Priest of Trocanto, am the lawful guardian of the shrine."

Just then the deep voice of the sergeant broke in.

"Sir, if the lieutenant is ready I'll bring up the packs an' the lieutenant can go through 'em."

Kynaston, called back to earth, looked up and nodded.

"Bring 'em all up in front of my tent, sergeant."

The three pack mules, tired and un-groomed, were led up and their packs decanted in front of the tent where Dorothy and Mrs. Fane sat in interested observation.

"There ought to be guns an' revolvers an' ammunition," commented Kynaston. "But! But! Who's got the button? I wonder what they've got packed away in those aparajos."

He soon found out, for under the quiet orders of the sergeant the guards slipped the packs and opened them in front of the wondering eyes of the little group.

"I thought at least we would find that the arms manufacturers of the country had shipped rifles and pistols to them across the border," commented Kynaston. "And I find nothing; absolutely nothing. A potato—sleeping mat—and a lot of dried red peppers, together with a package of beans—fríjoles— Wait a bit! What's that under your hand, Miss Upton?"

Miss Upton, started, looked curiously at the package under her hand which she had been resting upon the pack. She gave it a twitch, and a bundle wrapped in a rough, red blanket rolled out on the ground. Kynaston promptly picked it up.

"H-m! Three rifles that have no business here and a hundred rounds of ammunition. Wait a bit! Sergeant, look at the arsenal mark on those rifles and see where they were made."

The sergeant scrutinized them carefully in the early light.

"Sir, there's some mark on 'em that I can't make out. It looks like some sort of a flower as well as I can see."

Kynaston took the gun. As far as its appearance was concerned it resembled every other military rifle that he had ever seen, but when he turned the under side to the light he saw stamped in the dark wooden forehand of the piece the full-blown chrysanthemum that was the emblem of only one nation.

"H-m! An Arisaka rifle! Now how the deuce did that come here? It was made as far east as one can get without tumbling over to the westward again. How the deuce did a Japanese rifle come into Mexican hands?"

He had no opportunity to solve the problem, for even as he spoke Dorothy gave an exclamation and stepped back a pace as the covering of a package broke and a flood of silver pesos ran out at her feet.

"There's no proof of stealing in these," commented Kynaston. "Even if there were the stealing was done in Mexico, and the thief was not within our jurisdiction. What is this?"

It was a plain, dirty canvas sack perhaps a foot in depth and it bore the marks of rough handling. He picked it up and jugged it from hand to hand. The officer of the Carranza forces was obviously uneasy at the scrutiny.

"That, señor," he said, "is the greatest prize of all. It was stolen by these rebels across the line and was to be used by them to purchase arms."

Without waiting for any explanation as to what the contents of the sack might be, Kynaston cut the string and poured the contents out upon the saddle blanket which the sergeant had spread upon the ground. Certainly there was nothing in the roll of rags that rolled out to presage great value.

But on turning over the mass with his foot a glow of green caught his eyes. There tumbled out as his feet a great crystal bell the color of the richest blue grass that grows in Kentucky!

Dorothy picked it up.

"The padre was right," she said. "If it is indeed emerald it is worth a king's ransom. What will you do with it?"

And this wonderful emerald bell plays a big part—if you were writing this story, what part would you have the jewel play in the tangled web of war plotting? Its history might be one of bloody intrigue and its future may make it a pawn for a man's life.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Common American Birds

Interesting information about them supplied by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture

Kingbird

(Tyrannus tyrannus)

Length, about eight and one-half inches. The white lower surface and white-tipped tail distinguish this flycatcher.

Range: Breeds throughout the United States (except the southwestern part) and southern Canada; winters from Mexico to South America.

Habits and economic status: The kingbird is a pronounced enemy of hawks and crows, which it vigorously attacks at every opportunity, thereby affording efficient protection to nearby poultry yards and young chickens at large. It loves the open country and is especially fond of orchards and trees about farm buildings. No less than 85 per cent of its food consists of insects, mostly of a harmful nature. It eats the common rose chaffer or rose bug, and more remarkably still it devours blister beetles freely. The bird has been accused of eating honeybees to an injurious extent, but

to Minnesota, Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts; winters in the southern two-thirds of the United States and south to Panama.

Habits and economic status: This member of our beautiful wood warbler family, a family peculiar to America, has the characteristic voice, coloration, and habits of its kind. Trim of form and graceful of motion, when seeking food it combines the methods of the wren, creeper, and flycatcher. It breeds only in the northern parts of the eastern United States, but in migration it occurs in every patch of woodland and is so numerous that it is familiar to every observer.



Its place is taken in the West by Audubon's warbler. More than three-fourths of the food of the myrtle warbler consists of insects, practically all of them harmful. It is made up of small beetles, including some weevils, with many ants and wasps. This bird is so small and nimble that it successfully attacks insects too minute to be prey for larger birds. Scabies and plant lice form a very considerable part of its diet. Flies are the largest item of food; in fact, only a few flycatchers and swallows eat as many flies as this bird. The vegetable food (22 per cent) is made up of fruit and the seeds of poison oak or ivy, also the seeds of pine and of the bayberry.

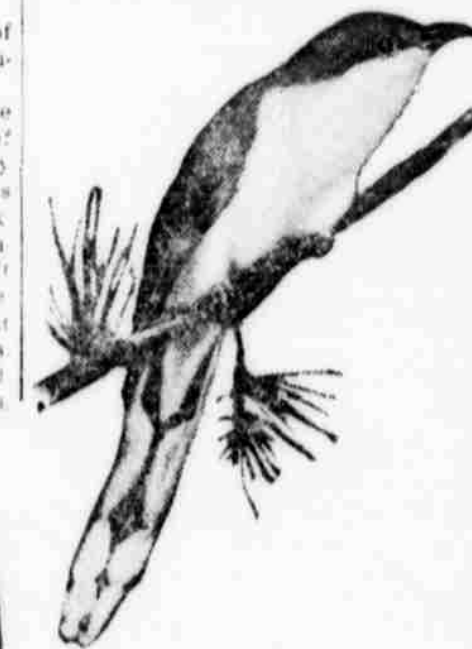
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

(Coccyzus americanus)

Length, about twelve inches. The yellow lower part of the bill distinguishes this bird from its near relative, the black-billed cuckoo.

Range: Breeds generally in the United States and southern Canada; winters in South America.

Habits and economic status: This bird lives on the edges of woodland, in groves, orchards, parks, and even in shaded village streets. It is some- times known as rain crow, because its very characteristic notes are supposed to foretell rain. The cuckoo has sly, furtive ways as it moves among the bushes or flits from tree to tree, and is much more often heard than seen. Unlike its European relative, it does not lay its eggs in other birds' nests, but builds a nest of its own. This is, however, a rather crude and shabby affair—hardly more than a platform of twigs sufficient to hold the greenish eggs. The cuckoo is extremely useful because of its insectivorous habits, especially as it shows a marked preference for the hairy caterpillars, which few birds eat. One stomach that was examined contained 250 American tent caterpillars; another, 217 fall webworms. In places where tent caterpillars are abundant they seem to constitute a large portion of the food of this and the black-billed cuckoo.



No Commendation. "You seem to think a great deal of that candidate."

"How do you arrive at that conclusion?" asked Senator Sorghum.

"Why, you have always supported him."

"Yes; but a public man's attitude toward a candidate may be that of the family toward the head of the house. You don't necessarily think any more of a man because you've got to support him."

Myrtle Warbler

(Dendroica coronata)

Length, five and one-half inches. The similarly colored Audubon's warbler has a yellow throat instead of a white one.

Range: Breeds throughout most of the forested area of Canada and south

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